

come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

DEMOCRATS AND TAX CUTS

(Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, when the Democrats on the other side make their arguments explaining why they oppose our tax cut package, I listen to them. It is not fun, but I do listen.

The problem is their arguments are extremely weak. The first argument is that most of the benefits go to the rich. My response to that argument is that they speak as if there is a pot of money that is distributed to people, that the Government divides up some amount of benefits and decides where the benefits go.

This is simply wrong. A tax cut simply means that the Government will take less. It will take less from upper income people. It will take less from lower income people. And let us please try to remember, it is their money to begin with; no one is giving them anything.

The second argument is that the tax credit should apply to the working poor who pay no income taxes but who do pay payroll and other taxes. But low-income workers already receive a subsidy for the payroll taxes through the EITC, and payroll taxes are for Medicare and Social Security anyway, for which they will also get a subsidy. So that is why their arguments simply do not add up.

LAKE TAHOE

(Mr. GIBBONS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, Mark Twain once described Lake Tahoe as the fairest picture the whole Earth affords. But with an estimated 30 percent of Lake Tahoe surrounding forests that are dead and dying and the lake losing a foot of clarity each year, many vital environmental changes must be made to ensure that we pass on to our children the same wonderful gift of nature in the same pristine fashion as which we once found it.

A very important first step in this battle was taken when the President hosted the Lake Tahoe environmental summit this weekend. As a result of these meetings, \$48 million in Federal funds were committed to the Lake Tahoe Basin for cleanup and conservation efforts. But most important, the majority of these dollars will be made available to the people of Lake Tahoe

and not to a Federal bureaucratic agency.

Mr. Speaker, the agreement reached at Lake Tahoe is a shining example that the concerns of environmentalists and private property owners are not mutually exclusive. I applaud all those involved in this weekend's activities.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH CARE

(Mrs. MORELLA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. MORELLA. Mr. Speaker, as budget negotiators work to finalize the details of our historic agreement, we must make bolstering children's health coverage for low-income children a top priority. It is unconscionable that the most developed country in the world has 10 million uninsured children, including 167,000 in my State of Maryland.

I strongly urge my conference committee colleagues to adopt the Senate bill's provisions which contain an additional \$24 billion for children's health and the guarantee that the funds cannot be used for other purposes. We must also insist on a meaningful benefits package, including vision and hearing coverage. It is about time we used an increased tobacco tax to fund children's health insurance. Smoking dramatically affects children's health and drains our health care system. Raising cigarette taxes is one of the best ways to keep children from smoking, which translates into fewer deaths later in life from smoking-related illnesses.

Mr. Speaker, 90 percent of uninsured children have working parents, and oftentimes these parents must choose between paying rent or buying private insurance or quitting their jobs to qualify for Medicaid. Let us seize this opportunity.

POLITICIZATION OF THE JUDICIARY

(Mr. DUNCAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Speaker, before coming to Congress I spent 7½ years as a circuit court judge in Tennessee. I tried the felony criminal cases, the murders, the rapes, the armed robberies, burglaries, drug cases, the attempted murder of James Earl Ray, many serious cases.

I have several years of experience with our criminal justice system. Yet never have I seen such a partisan political use of our legal system as is presently going on.

The worst is the action being taken against the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. BURTON], the chairman. His committee subpoenaed records from the Justice Department on July 8. Then his campaign records were subpoenaed just 3 days later. Blatant political retribution just because he was trying to do his job.

The Justice Department should not be used as a tool for partisan political purposes. Attorney General Reno should be embarrassed by this politicization of her department, and she should not allow it to proceed any further.

The White House enemies list from many years ago was just talk and did not come close to the partisan political use of our legal system that is being done against the gentleman from Indiana [Mr. BURTON] today, or, I might add, the political IRS audits of the Heritage Foundation and 11 other conservative think tanks while no similar action is being taken against liberal think tanks.

FOUR YEARS' DIFFERENCE

(Mr. GUTKNECHT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, what a difference 4 years can make. Four years ago, with the other team in charge, they were about to vote on the largest tax increase in American history, while the other problems of welfare and Medicare reform were being ignored. The Congressional Budget Office was projecting \$200 billion deficits as far as the eye could see. As we speak, negotiators are putting the finishing touches on a plan that will guarantee the first balanced budget in a generation and the first tax relief for working families in more than 16 years.

We have reformed welfare, and 1.3 million families are on payrolls rather than on the welfare rolls. Medicare is being saved. Mr. Speaker, what a difference 4 years have made.

MEDICARE

(Mr. STEARNS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I call all my colleagues' attention to the Medicare spending graph I have here. In 1995, this is what the President said. He said the plan of the Republicans was excessive, and he vetoed our bill because of these excessive cuts.

Now in 1997, he says, this budget over here keeps our fundamentals intact, protects Medicare for our parents, preserves and protects the program. Notice that this program is less spending than the one he vetoed in 1995. Let us review, Mr. Speaker. He vetoed a welfare bill three times, calling it extreme; yet he signed the identical welfare bill and tries to take credit. Then he goes on and talks about this Medicare program, this one with less spending, and says it protects our seniors whereas this one, which he vetoed, says it is extreme.

Now he goes on to say, our tax cuts are excessive and will blow a hole in the deficit. Mr. Speaker, I think the President has credibility problems. Let us remember this history in this budget debate.